NOVEMBER 17, 2014
1:00 – 3:00
EVENT # 33770

STAAR A
QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Disclaimer

- These slides have been prepared by the Student Assessment Division of the Texas Education Agency (TEA).

- If any slide is amended or revised for local use, please remove the TEA footer at the bottom of the slide.

Suggested Training for Region, District, and Campus Professionals

- It is the intent of TEA's Student Assessment Division that all resources created to clarify testing and accommodation policies be accessible to educators at the region, district, and campus levels, including classroom teachers.

- This is a comprehensive training but does not take the place of reading the associated documents.

- Relevant district and campus staff will need to read all of the policies and related resources once they are posted on the STAAR A webpage. These documents contain all the details.

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ELIGIBILITY

Should STAAR A be considered for ALL students receiving special education services and for ALL students who are dyslexic and receiving Section 504 services?

STAAR, with or without accommodations should be the first consideration. If a student can access STAAR, then no further discussion is necessary.

However, if a student is having difficulty accessing STAAR, even with allowable accommodations, then STAAR A may be considered.

A student may take STAAR A if he or she meets Step I and Step II of the STAAR A Eligibility Requirements.

What type of IEP/IAP documentation is needed to justify participation in STAAR A?

As stated in the STAAR A Eligibility Requirements

- The decision to administer STAAR A is based on the accommodations the student routinely receives in the classroom and that are documented in the student's IEP or IAP.
- The decision to administer STAAR A is based on the eligibility criteria outlined in Step I and Step II of this documentation form… [and] must include this form in the student's IEP or IAP to document eligibility for STAAR A.

Does STAAR A need to be documented in the IEP, or can we leave it as STAAR with accommodations?

If the ARD committee has reviewed the STAAR A Eligibility Requirements and determined that the student is eligible to take STAAR A, this decision must be documented in the IEP.

If the IEP lists STAAR with accommodations as the most appropriate assessment, the student will take STAAR.

Do we have to hold a full ARD or Section 504 meeting to document the STAAR A decision?

Documenting the assessment decision for students receiving special education services can be done through an amendment to the IEP.

For questions regarding the requirements of the Section 504 committee and the IAP, call 512-463-9290.

The STAAR A Eligibility Criteria includes "related disorder." What is a related disorder?

Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §74.28 requires that:

a) The board of trustees of a school district must ensure that procedures for identifying a student with dyslexia or a related disorder and for providing appropriate instructional services to the student are implemented in the district.

Texas Education Code (TEC) §38.003 defines dyslexia in the following way:

(1) "Dyslexia" means a disorder of constitutional origin manifested by a difficulty in learning to read, write, or spell, despite conventional instruction, adequate intelligence, and sociocultural opportunity.

(2) "Related disorders" include disorders similar to or related to dyslexia such as developmental auditory imperceptions, dysphasia, specific developmental dyslexia, developmental dysgraphia, and developmental spelling disability.

The STAAR A Eligibility Criteria includes "related disorder." What is a related disorder?

Dyslexia (and its related disorders) is a neurological, language-based disability.

If a district has not already specified "related disorders" and finds it necessary, the district may consider reviewing board-approved policy to ensure alignment with TAC §74.28 and TEC §38.003. TEA does not set policy guidelines for districts.

The Dyslexia Handbook includes information about **co-occurring** disorders (i.e., ADHD, anxiety, anger, etc.). Co-occurring disorders should be addressed through appropriate referral processes (Dyslexia Handbook, page 11).

TEC §42.006(a-1) also requires that students who are identified as having dyslexia be reported through PEIMS.

If a student is receiving special education services for a speech impairment, would he or she qualify for STAAR A?

According to the STAAR A Eligibility Requirements, the student would meet the requirement in Step I if:

The student has an identified disability and is receiving special education services.

(Notice that the student's qualifying disability is NOT a requirement.)

Moving on to Step II, the ARD committee would now need to determine if the student receives TWO OR MORE of the listed accommodation(s) in a particular subject based on the accommodations the student routinely receives in the classroom and that are documented in the student's IEP.

What if I have a student for whom a Spanish assessment may be appropriate?

If a grade 3-5 student is eligible for STAAR A but receives instruction in Spanish, the Section 504 or ARD committee in conjunction with the LPAC committee will need to determine the most appropriate assessment based on the student's disability-related needs versus linguistic needs. The student will either take

- STAAR Spanish with or without accommodations
- STAAR A in English with or without additional accommodations

Who will be approved for a STAAR A paper test and what will it look like?

Districts must make every effort to administer STAAR A online. When rare, unavoidable circumstances exist where students cannot access an assessment, such as those described below, TEA may authorize a paper administration.

- **Accommodations cannot be applied**
  A student may need a testing accommodation that is not possible to provide in an online setting.
- **Technology access is precluded**
  In rare situations where computers or technology are absolutely not available, as may occur on occasion with homebound students, JJAEPs, jails, or detention centers, districts may seek permission to administer a paper test.

The request for a paper administration of STAAR A can be accessed on TEA's District and Campus Coordinator webpage in December 2014.

Administration information, including what the paper test will look like and how it will be administered, will be posted to TEA's STAAR A Resources webpage at a later date.

TYPE I AND 2 ACCOMMODATIONS

Can a student have Type 1 and 2 accommodations and allowable procedures and materials in addition to the embedded accommodations on STAAR A?

Yes.

- Allowable test administration procedures and materials are listed in the District and Campus Coordinator Manual and are available on any state assessment for any student who needs them.

- Information about allowable accommodations is located on TEA's 2015 Accommodation Resources webpage. Once you open an accommodation document, look in the "Assessments" section. If STAAR A is listed, the accommodation may be used by an eligible student on STAAR A.

Assessments

For a student who meets the eligibility criteria, this accommodation may be used on

- STAAR
- STAAR Spanish
- STAAR L
- STAAR A
- TELPAS grades 2–12 reading

Available on STAAR A

Assessments

For a student who meets the eligibility criteria, this accommodation may be used on

- STAAR

NOT available on STAAR A

Is there a list of what supplemental aids are available on STAAR A so that the teachers know which ones they can add as paper accommodations?

No. Embedded accommodations are question-specific. The type of supplemental aid that is embedded as an accommodation aligns with the construct of the individual question.

> Example of embedded supplemental aid accommodations: T-charts, maps, place-value charts, graphics of scientific concepts, timelines, etc.

However, the exhibit window tool on certain assessments contains additional accommodations. See the STAAR A Student Tutorials for biology (Punnett Squares) and all writing assessments (writing checklists).

When taking STAAR A, can the student read the questions before reading the selection?

Students will work through the assessment independently at their own pace and may answer questions and read selections in any order they want.

Does eligibility for Oral Administration need to be documented for students taking STAAR A? What about documenting the level of reading support students will receive on STAAR A?

No. According to the Oral Administration policy, this accommodation does NOT apply to STAAR A since this assessment is not listed in the "Assessments" section of the policy.

In addition, the rationale for Oral Administration NOT applying to STAAR A is included in the "Examples/Types" section of the policy.

The IEP/IAP should NOT list Oral Administration (or levels of reading support) as a testing accommodation if the student is eligible for STAAR A. Text-to-speech is an embedded accommodation and the student will use it independently when needed.

How can spelling assistance be used on STAAR A?

Spell check is NOT an embedded accommodation for the written composition. Students eligible for Spelling Assistance will use what they use in class. See below for special instructions if using spell check, speech-to-text, text-to-speech, or word predictor.

The student may use a separate laptop/computer while STAAR A is open in TestNav. He or she will need to transfer the response to the composition typing box (unless eligible for Basic Transcribing).

OR

The student can exit the test session, use the accommodation, print out the response, log back in to STAAR A in TestNav, and then transfer his or her responses in the composition typing box (unless eligible for Basic Transcribing).

> Caution: Once STAAR A is exited, the student will not be able to see the writing prompt, the pop-ups or rollovers, or the writing checklists. TEA is currently discussing possible solutions to this problem.

How can linguistic accommodations, such as clarification in English, be applied to STAAR A?

Linguistic accommodations are available for eligible ELLs who also meet requirements for participation in STAAR A. The ARD or Section 504 Committee, in conjunction with the LPAC, may decide that clarification of words in English is appropriate for an ELL taking STAAR A. The accommodation will be provided by the test administrator in a similar fashion to how it has been previously provided in other administrations of state assessments.

The test administrator may orally clarify any construct-irrelevant words in test questions including popups and rollovers. However, it is important that any clarification provided by the test administrator not interfere with the content assessed in the question.

Please also note that special attention must be paid to the testing environment to ensure that the provision of this accommodation to specific students does not disturb, or provide an advantage to other students in the room.

TEST ADMINISTRATION

Can a campus decide that they will not offer STAAR A, even if they have students that are eligible to take it?

No. If the Section 504 or ARD committee determines that STAAR A is the most appropriate assessment and the student meets STAAR A eligibility requirements, the student must be administered STAAR A in that subject(s).

Should STAAR A be administered on laptops and PCs only?

Yes.

Can the campus schedule students on different days during testing week based on computer availability?

Districts are provided the latitude to adjust test dates within the testing week when a conflict arises for STAAR (including STAAR A) grades 3–8 and EOC assessments with the exception of STAAR (including STAAR A) grades 4 and 7 writing and English I and II assessments. No notification to TEA is required.

As the testing week approaches, districts that are having difficulty scheduling the online administration of the STAAR A grades 4 and 7 writing or English I and II tests due to issues related to their technology infrastructure should contact the Student Assessment Division's Test Security team at 512-463-9536 for guidance.

Will the preparation and administration of STAAR A be similar to that of other online assessments?

Yes. STAAR A is delivered through the same testing platform as all other online assessments (i.e., EOC online, SOA, STAAR L, TELPAS). Districts will follow the directions in the District and Campus Coordinator Manual and Test Administrator Manual including ensuring testing infrastructure is in place, organizing test sessions, and monitoring online administrations.

Is there a package in the testing software that allows the test administrator to sign on and see the progress of each student similar to STAAR L?

Yes.

How do we handle technical difficulties on the day of the test?

Contact TEA's Student Assessment Division at 512-463-9536.

Contact Pearson's Austin Operations Center at 800-627-0225 if you require technical assistance.

Can the test administrator assist students having difficulty navigating through STAAR A?

At any point during the test session, the test administrator may use the SAY directions in the Test Administrator Manual to assist students if they have trouble navigating through the assessment or need reminders of how to turn the tools and accessibility features on and off. In addition, the test administrator may read aloud the information presented to the student in the Help tool.

Can the test administrator set up the student's online settings or can a "reminder card" with the student's preferences be provided to each student?

This question is in regards to the settings in the Accessibility Panel, specifically the text-to-speech speed and volume, the zoom size, and the color and contrast options.

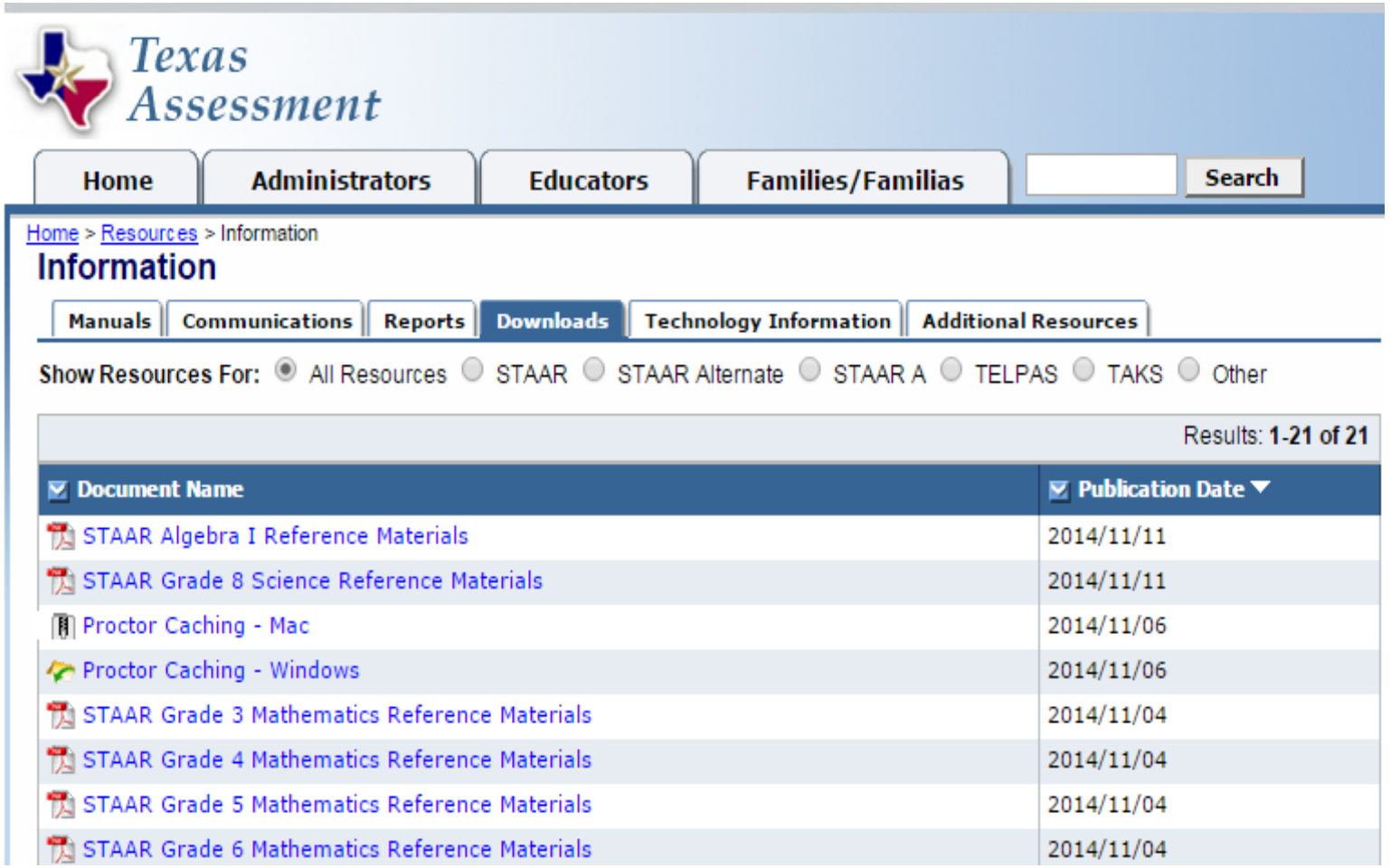
The test administrator may NOT set up the student's accommodation preferences nor can the test administrator require a student to use the preferences determined during the tutorials.

However, a test administrator may provide the student with a "reminder card" that indicates the settings the student prefers as determined during the tutorial session. The student must be allowed to determine whether he or she uses these settings when taking STAAR A.

Can the reference materials be printed out for the student taking STAAR A?

Mathematics and science reference materials are available in the online testing environment in the exhibit window tool.

These materials may also be printed out and provided to the student. When printing out these materials, make sure to use the non-ruler versions located on the Pearson website.



What STAAR A assessments include the calculator tool?

A calculator tool is provided in the online environment only for the assessments that require a calculator.

- STAAR A grade 8 mathematics: graphing calculator
- STAAR A Algebra I: graphing calculator
- STAAR A Biology: four-function calculator, scientific calculator, graphing calculator

What STAAR A assessments include the calculator tool?

For online testing, districts must ensure that each student has the appropriate **handheld** calculator.

Refer to the STAAR Calculator Policy:
http://tea.texas.gov/student.assessment/staar/math/

Calculators are not included on STAAR A grades 3–7 mathematics assessments or the STAAR A grades 5 and 8 science assessments. However, if a student meets the eligibility criteria for the Calculation Devices accommodation, he or she may use a handheld calculator.

Can pop-ups and rollovers be read aloud by text-to-speech?

Text-to-speech does NOT read aloud pop-ups and rollovers. However, the test administrator may read aloud these embedded accommodations at students' request.

The test administrator may NOT read aloud any text in reading selections, editing selections, and editing items. This will be indicated by a DO NOT READ icon.

Why has the DO NOT READ icon only been placed next to the title in reading and editing selections and not on every page of the selection?

This decision was made intentionally based on several factors.

- Test administrators have never been allowed to read the reading selections or the editing selections/questions. This policy remains the same for STAAR A. This information will be included in all test administrator manuals and should be part of test administrator training.

- If the icon had been added to every page in a selection, the page count for each selection would have increased. This may have been a problem for students with disabilities, since educator feedback has indicated that this population has difficulty scanning through multiple pages in a selection to find answers to test questions.

Since STAAR A is an online assessment, will students taking a writing test have to type their responses to the written compositions?

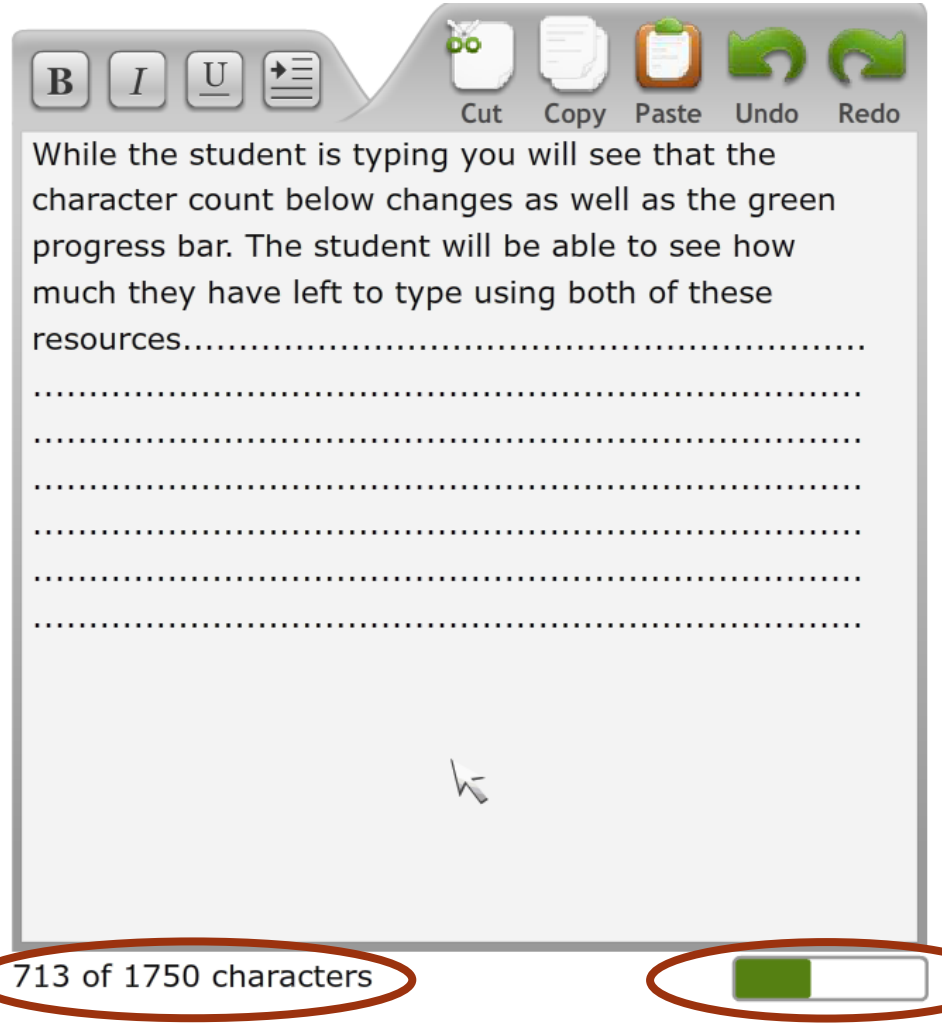
Students taking STAAR A will be recording their responses online, which includes typing responses to the written composition. However, students who are eligible for the Basic Transcribing accommodation may have the test administrator type responses (mistakes and all) into STAAR A.

TEA is currently in discussion regarding the typing proficiency of students with disabilities taking STAAR A. Any changes made to this policy will be communicated to districts prior to testing.

How many typed characters are allowed for the written composition and short answer questions?

The character count for written compositions and short answer questions:

- 1,750 for all written compositions
- 675 for short answers



What procedures should be followed for students who are eligible for STAAR A but are deaf/hard-of-hearing and cannot access text-to-speech?

- **Eligibility for oral or signed administration** – If the student is eligible to take the STAAR A, text-to-speech is a built-in accommodation. For deaf or hard of hearing students, signing or oral interpreting are allowable access methods. Separate eligibility for the accommodation is not needed and documenting the level of reading/signing support is not a requirement. Test administrators should provide the same reading support to students as they need in class, keeping in mind what sections of STAAR A are not eligible for reading support.

- **Training** – Teachers and interpreters who are administering or interpreting the tests need to be trained on the general instructions for administering statewide assessments to students who are deaf or hard of hearing, **as well as** the oral administration appendix.

What procedures should be followed for students who are eligible for STAAR A but are deaf/hard-of-hearing and cannot access text-to-speech?

- **Projecting the STAAR A** – Test administrators who will be signing STAAR A will be given proctor authorization that will allow them to log in and access a test for projection purposes. Refer to the *Assessment Management System User's Guide* for specific instructions on printing authorizations.

- **Group administration** – Depending on the needs of the students, the test administrator can move around the room reading/signing as needed or can read aloud/sign the test to the entire group of students. (Remember, the test administrator cannot read aloud/sign any text with a DO NOT READ icon)

What procedures should be followed for students who are eligible for STAAR A but are deaf/hard-of-hearing and cannot access text-to-speech?

- **Students who don't sign and depend on lipreading** – The test administrator can read aloud the test as the student watches the face/lips – "oral interpreting". For students who don't need help with the whole test or can understand some of the text to speech, the staff member can repeat just the parts as the student needs.

- **Students who don't have hearing aids or FM systems and who don't sign** – Consider how the student accesses material in the classroom. If the student depends primarily on vision to access information, use of a test administrator to read the test to the student, acting as an "oral interpreter," is an option. If the student primarily uses hearing and can understand the text to speech but needs some words repeated, the test administrator can repeat just the parts as the student needs. If a student primarily uses hearing but cannot understand the text to speech, the test administrator can read the question out loud to the student. Use of an FM system for testing purposes may be helpful. This should be determined before day of the test.

MISCELLANEOUS

What are the limitations of the pencil tool?

The pencil tool is available on all online assessments. It is not intended to be used for scratch work, but as a mark-up tool (e.g., circling information, labeling figures, making hash marks). Therefore, if a student is using the pencil tool for complex scratch work, he or she may encounter the tool's character limit (2,000 pencil points or 50 lines). If this happens, the student would have to erase some pencil marks to continue using the tool.

Are there any graduation implications for a student who takes STAAR A instead of STAAR?

No. STAAR A is a general assessment just like STAAR.

Where can I find information about how STAAR A will be measured in the accountability system?

Contact TEA's Performance Reporting Division at (512) 463-9704 or performance.reporting@tea.state.tx.us.

TEA CONTACT INFORMATION

- Student Assessment Division
  - 512-463-9536
  - Assessment.studentswithdisabilities@tea.state.tx.us
- Curriculum Division (and Dyslexia Contact)
  - 512-463-9581
- Division of Federal and State Education Policy (Special Education)
  - 512-463-9414
- Section 504 Contact Information
  - 512-463-9290